



Plugging an Abandoned Water Well

Abandoned water wells pose serious safety hazards. An abandoned well is a direct pathway for contaminants to be introduced into an aquifer, a source of drinking water. Some wells are up to 36 inches in diameter and can cause serious and sometimes fatal accidents. Perhaps one of the most well known such cases occurred in 1987 in Midland, Texas when eighteen month old Baby Jessica fell into a well with a diameter of only 8 inches. In order to prevent contamination of drinking water and accidents, abandoned water wells must be plugged!

In November of 1985, *Water Well Rules, Regulations and Standards* were promulgated by the Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development. These regulations govern the registration, construction, and plugging of water wells in the state and also require licensing of water well drillers. In 2010, the responsibilities for water well rules and regulations were transferred to the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Office of Conservation.

When does a well have to be plugged?

- A well must be plugged if it is abandoned. According to the regulations, a well is considered to be abandoned “if its use has been permanently discontinued; its pumping equipment has been permanently removed; the well is in such a state of disrepair that it cannot be used to supply water and/or has the potential for transmitting surface contaminants into an aquifer; the well poses potential health or safety hazards, or the well is in such a condition that it cannot be placed in the active, standby, or inactive status.”
- The well must be plugged within 90 days of the date of abandonment.
- A well does not have to be plugged if it is on standby, or if it is inactive but is maintained for future use.



How do you plug a well?

- To plug a well the pump and any other obstructions must be removed from the well. The well must then be filled with a cement-bentonite slurry from the bottom of the well to the ground surface and the casing cut off at or below the ground surface.
- The well must be plugged in accordance to the methods and standards of the regulations. Abandoned wells must be plugged by an LDNR licensed water well contractor. However, a non-licensed person may plug a domestic water well at his/her own or leased property which served a single family house which is his/her permanent residence, or was used for watering livestock on his/her farm. This person must have the required knowledge and equipment to the satisfaction of LDNR and must obtain approval from LDNR prior to the beginning of the plugging operation.
- Plugging and abandonment forms must be submitted to LDNR within 30 days after the plugging of the well.
- For a copy of the regulations, please contact the LDNR Office of Conservation at 225-342-5515 or visit the LDNR website at www.DNR.Louisiana.Gov.

Abandoned water wells are difficult to find and very few records exist that identify their locations. If you know of the existence of an abandoned water well, please contact the Office of Conservation to report it. Help protect the health and safety of your community!

“Protect Your Water One Drop At A Time”